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12 FEB 1958

Geographic Intelligence

We maintain within our Office of Research and Reports a group of competent geographic analysts and photo intelligence specialists who provide research and technical support to all parts of the Agency, and contribute substantially to the National Intelligence Surveys Program.

A major part of the work of the geographic group, mostly in the form of geographic intelligence reports and maps, is undertaken in direct support of operations planning and field activities, either of the Agency or the Armed Services. On the accuracy of this effort depends the lives of individuals who are either to be rescued from hostile territory or put into hostile territory to accomplish operational missions. For instance, a drop zone selected in the Far East was used by covert operational personnel and the selection was highly commended by the people doing the drop. Air Force crew members have been briefed preparatory to special missions, using the geographic reports prepared by this Office, on how to evade or escape should USAF planes crash land behind enemy lines. There have been several reports from the field to the effect that lives have been saved because of the accuracy of these and similar briefing materials. Another type of report prepared by this group is the map and textual analysis of important operational targets and safe approaches to them. Still other studies deal with the distribution, characteristics and attitudes of minority groups living within the boundaries of the Bloc. These are used for operational and psychological warfare purposes.

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During the past year, current geographic intelligence reports and briefings on Antarctica and on the USSR operations in the Antarctic have been produced to analyze Soviet achievements and long-range intentions as they may affect United States interests. More recently, reports of USSR activity which seem to be indicative of impending moves toward announcement of political claims have required geographic intelligence support for the preparation of a Special Estimate of Soviet Reactions to Possible United States Actions on Antarctica.

Reconnaissance and photographic intelligence continue to increase in national intelligence interest and are now more important to the United States by many orders of magnitude than ever before. The scope and degree of our intelligence dependence upon information obtained from aerial photography is clearly indicated by the paramount position suggested for it by the President in his "open skies" proposal to the USSR for mutual air inspection. Currently, the increasing volume of aerial and ground photography, which is being obtained by United States forces on a global basis, continues to provide detailed answers to questions regarding Communist capabilities in potential areas of operations. CIA, in increasingly closer cooperation with the U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Army, continues to expand its utilization of this growing volume of photography to assist in the preparation of current intelligence reports, national estimates, and research studies.

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For example, current photographic intelligence analyses continue to yield significant details of rail traffic between selected towns in the USSR, and the building of airfields, radar, and air defense sites in the Soviet Bloc. These analyses are undertaken in direct support of the IAC Watch Committee. Study of Soviet developments in the field of guided missiles has been aided by ground photography.

As a result of the increasing volume of reconnaissance photography being received in the United States and the intensified demands within CIA for comprehensive utilization of it, the capacity of the CIA photographic intelligence has been expanded substantially.

Experience has shown that one of the most effective ways of presenting intelligence is to make extensive use of specially constructed maps. Our cartographic unit within the Office plans and prepares these intelligence maps for inclusion in CIA reports, National Intelligence Estimates, National Intelligence Surveys, and for many other purposes including covert planning and operations.

An extensive map library and map reference facility is also maintained for use by all authorized Government officials. Its specialized collection of foreign maps is kept current through a coordinated and highly effective interagency map procurement program that reflects the requirements of the several Government agencies.

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